

Testimony in Support of SB 700
An Act Concerning Number Plates for Veterans Who Received the Purple Heart
Public Hearing, Veterans' Affairs Committee

February 19, 2013

I'd like to thank this committee for having this hearing to address this important issue facing Combat Wounded Veterans at the Connecticut DMV today.

I'd also like to thank Senator Stillman, her staff, the other Senators and Representatives who are in support and have signed on and have introduced this Proposed Bill SB 700, and my thanks to Dan Fisher, the Veteran's Field Representative from the office of Congressman Joe Courtney who also helped me.

To make a long story short, we lived in Connecticut all our lives. When I retired we moved to Florida for 10 years. Then my wife and I moved back to Connecticut to be closer to our children and grandchildren.

We went to the Department of Motor Vehicles office to get Connecticut driver's license photo IDs and to register both cars. We had no problem with the wife's car--just swapped plate for plate. But my car had a Combat Wounded Veterans plate from Florida and was denied the Connecticut Combat Wounded plate even though I had and showed my DD-214 to officials.

They said they could do nothing about it, and I was told to call a number on the DMV's website page and get their paperwork and application and send it along with a \$50 fee and a copy of my DD-214, so they can verify it then release it back to me to give their paperwork back to the DMV to get the plate.

I don't want to belong to any national organization for a fee just to increase its membership rolls. And I refuse to do that--it's not fair to us wounded veterans and it's not right. Look, this is personal to me. I do not respect any organization that takes money from wounded veterans to belong to their clubs. If they want us to belong then they should ask us and not ask for a fee to join because most vets can't be bothered with organizations like that and they don't help.

First of all this license plate is not a MOPH (Military Order of the Purple Heart) plate. It is in fact a Combat Wounded Veterans plate issued by Connecticut and as a result, being a recipient of the Purple Heart Award qualifies veterans for the plate--not being a member in the MOPH.

Furthermore the responsibility falls on the State (i.e., DMV officials) to certify recipients of the Purple Heart on a veteran's DD-214. Indeed there is a precedent for this in that the DMV is responsible for certifying Connecticut residents as veterans through special identification to which veterans are entitled on their driver's license. It's just like what tax collectors do at town halls all over Connecticut--they verify DD-214s in order to give property tax relief to all Connecticut residents who served in the military.

It is not in the spirit of government to compel residents to join any private organization like the MOPH in order to receive entitlements like the Combat Wounded Veterans plate that are offered by the State of Connecticut. Now let me repeat that *no* outside organization should have any part in the issuance of the State-administered Combat Wounded Veterans license plate program, period.

And for the record I'd like to close by saying that I served as a Corporal in the United States Marine Corps in a ground combat unit in Viet Nam (67-68) and received two Purple Hearts during my tour of duty. I would appreciate it if you could correct this matter and do the right thing for us Combat Wounded Veterans in Connecticut.

Who knows? You may see a lot more Purple Heart plates over the roads in Connecticut if you fix this soon. I don't know how many more, but it will be more than you see now.

Thank You,

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